What’s a bystander + What to do when you see cyberbullying?

Community Blue Tiger May 15, 2020

Picture this: You’re playing Overwatch with a new group of people on Xbox, having a good time. You select your favorite character, Reinhardt, the knight who fights for justice and defends the innocent. The next thing you know, one player, we’ll call them Reaper, starts making fun of another player, Tracer. At first, you shrug it off, after all they were probably just joking. Over the course of the hour Reaper is constantly tearing Tracer down and saying mean comments like, “You suck. Totally expected from a <racial slur>.” You know this behavior isn’t okay, but what do you do?

Before we dive into how we help Tracer. Let’s define some terms.

Cyberbullying is defined by stopbullying.gov as, “bullying that takes place over digital devices and includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else.” Cyberbullying can be intimidating or threatening in nature. It can also cross the line into unlawful behavior.

Bystander is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as, “a person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part.” They are not directly involved, but have the choice to intervene, speak up, or do something about it (Snow College). Bystanders are in a position to discourage, report, prevent, or interrupt a potential incident.

What to do?

So, what could you do in this scenario as a bystander? There are a few actions you could take. Not all these ideas may work best for you. Choose actions that you are most comfortable doing.

Ignore the situation. You can ignore the situation; however, this isn't the best option for supporting a fellow gamer and doing your part to make gaming fun for everyone. That said, there are instances where this may be the best option if you don't feel safe.

Stand up to Reaper. As a bystander, you have a choice to help another person. In this case, you can support Tracer by vocalizing that you do not agree with Reaper, telling Reaper their comments are hurtful, and sharing positive comments about Tracer. When engaging with a bully, talk in a neutral or positive way. To prevent the situation from getting worse, do not engage in arguments, commenting wars, or act aggressively.

Talk to Tracer. As a bystander, you can reach out to Tracer, offer support, and check-in with them to make sure they are okay. If the situation with Reaper doesn't improve, you both could start a new match without Reaper, and who knows maybe you'll make a new friend.

Mute, block, and report. If you experience or witness inappropriate content or behavior, we encourage you to mute, block, and report the player acting inappropriately. We all want to make Xbox the best place to play and a great way to do that is by reporting instances of misconduct.

In life, like in Overwatch, we all have a bit of Reinhardt, in us. Together we can make Xbox the best place to play. Everyone can become a force for good in the Xbox community by committing to being an active bystander, stand up to the cyberbully, talk to the person who is being harassed, and mute, block, and report the cyberbully.